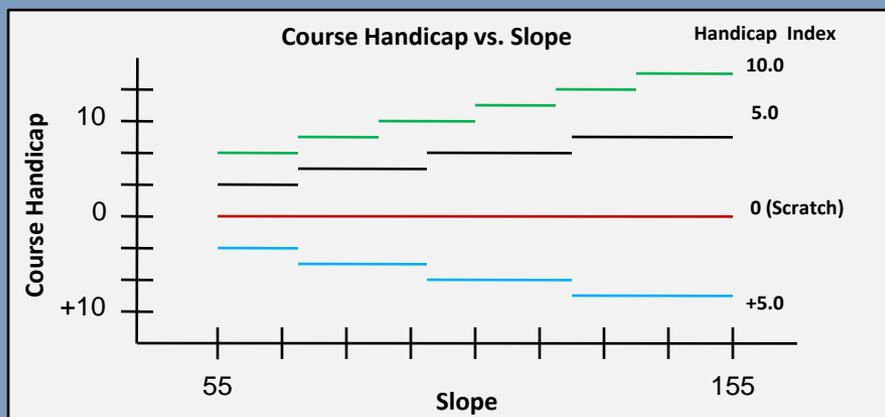


Scratch is an arbitrary level of performance

– A Scratch golfer is defined as “a player who can play to a Course Handicap™ of zero on any and all rated golf courses.” If the USGA Course Rating System™ was changed such that Course Ratings™ were all ten strokes less, the Scratch expectation would be lowered by ten strokes and there probably would be no Plus Handicaps. Close inspection shows that adjustment of these Handicaps would produce the same relative changes between higher and lower-Handicap players as when their handicaps were on opposite sides of scratch.



•When a zero-Handicap (Scratch) golfer plays a 5.0 Handicap player, most of us are comfortable with the notion that the higher-Handicap player needs more strokes from the lower-Handicap player as the Slope increases and less as the Slope decreases. The same can be said for a +5.0 player and a zero-Handicap player. As Slope increases the higher-Handicap player (even though Scratch) needs more strokes from the lower-Handicap player and, conversely, fewer strokes as Slope decreases.

Fun Fact: Less than half a percent of golfers in the U.S. maintain a Handicap Index® on the plus side of Scratch. (0.13%)

The USGA Handicap System™

Slope on the Plus Side of Scratch



Slope on the Plus Side of Scratch

• Slope is the measure of how much harder or easier a course plays for a higher-Handicap player **relative** to how it plays for a lower-Handicap player, even when the higher-Handicap player is Scratch. The term Slope actually comes from the mathematical slope of a line (rise over run) when graphing scores against Handicap Index®.

It is important to understand that the USGA Handicap Formula is the same for all players.

Note: When a golfer returns a score of less than the Course Rating™ on a high-Slope course, the Slope adjustment moves the negative Handicap Differential™ (HD) closer to zero. For example:

$$HD = [68 - 72.0] \times 113 / 140 = -3.2$$

$$HD = [68 - 72.0] \times 113 / 110 = -4.1$$

To some, it is instinctive that the Handicap Differential™ should be an even lower value (farther from zero) because it was scored on a high-Slope course. A high-Slope course presents the challenges (and opportunities) for outstanding players to distance themselves from a Scratch performance and, conversely, a low-Slope course does not present the same challenges (or opportunities).

- **What is the difference between a high and low Slope Rating® course?**
If one could picture a higher Slope Rating® course, it would present many more obstacles to navigate (trees, water, rough, etc.) than a low Slope course. On such a course, it is easier for the scratch golfer to separate from the rest of the field. This golfer overcomes yardage and obstacles more easily than the bogey golfer does. The bogey golfer's scores rise faster on a high Slope Rating course than the scores of a scratch or plus-Handicap golfer.
- **When applying a percentage of Course Handicap™, why does the USGA's recommendation bring a plus Handicap closer to zero?**
When a percentage of Course Handicap is applied, both a low and high handicap are brought closer to zero. For example, playing at 100% of Course Handicap, the spread of two players, a +5 and 10 Course Handicap, is 15 strokes. In a competition where 80% of Course Handicap is utilized, the +5 becomes a +4 (+5 x 0.8) and the 10 becomes an 8 (10 x 0.8). The spread between their adjusted Course Handicap is 12, which is 80% of the original spread of 15 using 100%. Relative to a scratch player, both have been adjusted by the same percentage. In this example, a scratch player would receive one less stroke from a plus Handicap and give two fewer strokes to a high Handicap.

